



Facility Equity Initiative – Application Overview

Every child deserves to attend a 21st century learning environment. This is not a reality for many Rhode Island students that enroll in our neediest districts. The five neediest communities encompass over 30% of all Statewide school facility needs and enroll the highest percentages of educationally underserved students, which often require additional supports to succeed. With comparatively limited resources (local property taxes and bonding capacity) it is challenging for these communities to provide students with facilities that optimize teaching and learning.

Consistent with State Priorities and Rhode Island General Law, **the Rhode Island Department of Education has created a new initiative to help create facility equity between Rhode Island students.** The pilot year of this program provides \$10M in funding to prioritize the five LEAs with base reimbursement rates over 65%: Central Falls, Woonsocket, Pawtucket, Providence, and West Warwick. These resources will allow LEAs to fund projects that otherwise would not advance or rely on issuing high interest bonds. The first year of the Facility Equity Initiative will be funded through the SBA Capital Fund, while future iterations of this initiative are included in RIDE's Capital Budget.

Additionally, RIDE has partnered with the Office of Energy Resources and the Office of Diversity, Equity and Opportunity to leverage available resources, which will allow energy projects and projects that achieve a minimum 15% Minority Business Enterprise utilization to receive *100% State reimbursement*.

Application Overview

The objective of FY 2022 School Building Authority Capital Fund is to begin creating Facility Equity within our state, by leveraging existing resources and targeting them to communities with limited financial capacity. The scoring rubric awards incremental points based on the type of project, number of students impacted, wealth of the community and timeline.

- **Examples of Eligible Projects**

- Modernizing Science Labs
- Converting Libraries into Media Centers
- Improving Auditoriums
- Creating Project Based Learning Maker Spaces
- Providing Learning Commons or Breakout Spaces
- Common Spaces with Dual Student/Community Use
- Lighting & Energy Upgrades that Improve Learning

As part of an eligible project, associated health & safety upgrades can be included, such as:

- Heating & Ventilation Systems (i.e., providing ventilation to new Media Center)
- Building Envelope (i.e., window replacements when modernizing science labs)
- Hazardous Materials Abatement (i.e., asbestos abatement when improving auditoriums)
- Energy Improvements (i.e., new LED lights in the hallway leading to the Maker Space)



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- **Application Requirements**

LEAs seeking SBA Capital Fund support must have an active Necessity of School Construction approval **and** commit to completing the project by **December 31, 2022**. LEAs without a Necessity of School Construction approval for projects can seek an approval by the Commissioner for projects less than \$500,000. Interested LEAs must submit a signed request letter, budget estimate, immediate health and safety certificate, and supporting documentation.

- **Project Prioritization**

The application has several mechanisms to identify and prioritize educational enhancements projects by awarding points based on the communities' need, the number of students impacted, commitment to using MBE vendors, and commitment to complete projects before the 2022-2023 school year.

- Type of Project: preference given to high impact visual enhancements, creation of 21st century learning spaces, and spaces with dual student/community use.
- Number of Students Impacted: community spaces will be prioritized over single classroom projects.
- Project Schedule: Projects that can complete prior to December 31, 2022, are given preference.
- Community Wealth: Factors in a community's reimbursement rate.

- **Additional Incentives**

Districts' seeking lighting upgrades (standalone or part of a larger project) will have their local share paid for by the Office of Energy Resource. As a result, **awarded lighting projects will be 100% funded by the State.**

District's that utilize at least 15% MBE participation will have their local share paid by the State. As a result, **awarded projects that achieve *at least 15%* MBE participation will be 100% funded by the State.**